

"The Department is to be commended for starting to address the financial realities facing the country"

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## OPENING STATEMENT

### SECRETARY OF DEFENSE—Dept. of Defense FY 2012 BUDGET

MARCH 2, 2011

This morning, the Committee welcomes Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense; Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Bob Hale Undersecretary of Defense, Comptroller. We appreciate your continuing dedication and service to the men and women in our armed forces.

You appear before the Committee at a time of many financial challenges. The Congress continues to work toward finalizing fiscal year 2011 while we begin deliberations on the fiscal year 2012 request. In addition, the Committee is doing its work against the backdrop of annual federal deficit of roughly \$1 trillion and a total national debt of \$14 trillion. Obviously, this has a profound effect on the outlook and thinking on Capitol Hill.

The Department is to be commended for starting to address the financial realities facing the country. I would like to acknowledge your efforts to find \$78 billion in savings beginning in fiscal

year 2012 and extending through fiscal year 2016. In addition, we recognize you have realigned \$100 billion within the Department to exercise better stewardship over DoD resources. Of course, the Committee has a keen interest in the details of these initiatives and we look forward to working closely with the Department to achieve the most effective use of Defense resources.

You appear before the Committee at a time of significant foreign policy challenges as well. We are proud of the accomplishments of our service personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are committed to ensuring that our deployed forces have the support they require. As the US continues operations in Afghanistan, and transitions this year to a diplomatic presence in Iraq, we are also interested in the strategic view of these operations. What's achievable through continuing operations in Afghanistan, and how long should we stay? What should be the level of US commitment to funding the development of Iraqi and Afghan security forces? To what extent should the US Defense Department be involved in economic development in Afghanistan?

There are emerging security challenges as well. Over the past months we have seen in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere an uprising against the governments in those countries. How is the Defense Department postured in the face of these developments?

In addition, there are longstanding national security concerns including Iran, North Korea, and elsewhere. We are interested in your views on how the FY 2012 budget provides for US forces in light of these challenges.

We thank you for your years of dedicated service. We look forward to your presentation of the fiscal year 2012 budget.

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